

In June, will you vote for the climate?

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Body

Since the early 1990s, the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has been sounding the alarm on the climate emergency. Its recent report makes it clearer than ever that time is running out to avoid the worst impacts of climate breakdown. The report highlights the implications for human health and the costs of living on a hotter planet.

It is easy to feel hopeless and overwhelmed in the face of the IPCC's urgent warnings. We encourage combating feelings of hopelessness and anxiety by taking direct, meaningful action on climate. Ontario's upcoming election presents a timely opportunity to do so.

Ontario has the potential to become a global leader in clean energy production. While Ontario continues to applaud its phase out of coal, in reality, it is currently on a trajectory to increase Ontario's electricity emissions. Roughly four per cent of the province's electricity is generated from fossil fuels, primarily natural gas. Ontario plans to build more natural gas plants instead of investing in ever-cheaper, carbon-free alternatives, despite overwhelming evidence that we needed to reduce emissions starting 30 years ago.

Early conversations on climate change often touted natural gas - a mixture of methane, ethane and other flammable gases - as an environmentally friendly alternative to coal. Nowadays, governments are aware that methane is the second largest contributor to global warming. When released into the atmosphere, it forms toxic air pollution that has deadly health impacts. Unexpected leaks of methane seep into the atmosphere during production, distribution, and end-use stages. Using this gas is an outdated solution unbefitting the climate emergency.

Despite plummeting costs of renewables, the government continues to invest in natural gas, locking in a dependence on carbon for decades to come. Ontario deserves a government with the foresight and political gall needed to keep our planet livable for generations.

It has been well-documented that eco-anxiety and mental health issues related to climate change are on the rise. Young people in particular are increasingly experiencing fear, sadness and even existential dread. The urge to turn away from reality - to wait for "somebody else" to fix the problem - is overwhelming. The sheer magnitude of the problem can be paralyzing.

Fortunately, our democracy allows us to influence governmental decisions. With a June 2 election, Ontarians are uniquely placed to have our voices heard. The current government has slashed environmental protections, demonstrating that climate is not a priority. This election is a critical opportunity to elect leaders who appreciate the urgency of the climate crisis. We must elect politicians who recognize the importance of renewable energy, commit to drastically cutting emissions and understand the window for taking action is rapidly shrinking.

In June, will you vote for the climate?

Ontario deserves a government with the foresight to stop poisoning its population with its energy decisions. We need a government that cares for the planet. A government that will invest in a safer, healthier future. We have the power to make that happen.

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